

Rep. Peter Welch voted to extend tax cuts for middle- and lower-income Americans on Thursday, while blasting Republican maneuvers to hold legislative business hostage as the party fights for tax cuts for millionaires and billionaires.

Passed by a vote of 234 to 188, the Middle Class Tax Relief Act (H.R. 4853) would permanently extend tax cuts enacted in 2001 and 2003 for all income below \$200,000 for individuals and \$250,000 for married couples. Without an extension, tax rates would revert to pre-2001 levels on January 1, 2011.

"Extending tax relief for middle-class Americans will help the economy and help Vermonters struggling to get by. But digging ourselves deeper into debt by borrowing \$700 billion to give millionaires and billionaires tax breaks is simply unconscionable," Welch said.

"At a time when we're nickel and diming hungry and cold Vermonters by cutting fuel assistance, food stamps and Social Security payments, how can we even consider doling out billions to those who need it least? And at a time when our national debt has reached an untenable level, how can we even consider borrowing \$700 billion to fund tax breaks for the rich?"

While the Middle Class Tax Relief Act focuses on lower- and middle-income Americans, the tax relief would apply to the first \$200,000 or \$250,000 of income for all taxpayers.

The bill now goes to the Senate, though Senate Republican leaders have vowed to hold this and all other legislation hostage unless tax cuts are extended for all income levels.